

JUL 14 1978

THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

Office of the President

July 1, 1978

Dear M.:

This letter, although delayed in transcription, correctly bears the date of my assumption of the responsibilities of this office. In fact, I have been thinking along these lines for several weeks in anticipation, pondering how important is the role of the supporters of The Rockefeller University in the world it serves. It is now, and will continue to be, one of my most gratifying obligations to share my thoughts about the future development of the University, with you as one of the external partners of the superb people who are the heart of the institution.

Many people have, of course, questioned me closely about 'my plans' for The University. While inevitably, I had to form some model of its future prospects, as part of the decision process by which I could be recruited here, we all realistically understood that detailed planning must be an evolutionary process. This will entail hard work, controversy and conciliation among numerous elements: preeminently the research faculty, the Board, the Council and other supporters of the University, as well as the staff of this office and myself. When so much of the discretionary margin of the University's operations depends on private and public funding, we can hardly be said to be able to plan the details of our own future without constant engagement of the sources of those funds.

Nevertheless, there are a few principles which are central to the traditions of the University; and perhaps my most important statement is my enthusiastic adherence to those traditions. I knew, in accepting these responsibilities, that radical change in scope or direction was not a realistic possibility. While too rigid a constraint would be stifling, a conservationist approach to the University's future suited my own aspirations quite closely. The traditions of excellence, of scientific opportunity, of public service "pro bono humani generis" are so well exemplified at the University, and there are so many stresses on other comparable institutions, that it will be a fulfilling and challenging task to sustain those traditions through the 1980's and beyond.

The world is changing very rapidly: the civic and national context of the Rockefeller University are very different from those of the founder's Institute for Medical Research. The very character of global science has changed. We have far broader conceptions of human needs for health today, in large measure because of the successes of the earlier tradition in coping with acute infectious diseases. A far wider range of universal knowledge is needed to cope with those needs than was appropriate to wipe out bacterial scourges; and we pursue the good of mankind in a far broader social context than ever before. Our investigators move freely from "The Rockefeller" to the university establishment of the country and the world, and we can be proud of fulfilling the obligations of the title "University", even while doing this in our own unique style.

I can then summarize my own aspirations as just that fulfillment: to remain a premier university, whilst adhering to the core purposes of the old Institute. With a broad spectrum of investigation and training, that ranges from the most basic biomedical science to clinical and public health applications I believe that the Rockefeller University can offer a prototype of a healthy and well integrated community of scholars, and that this will continue to justify your and the public's confidence, in the excellence of our endeavors and in the social utility of such a dedication.

It would be unthinkable to conclude this report without paying a small measure of tribute to my predecessor, Fred Seitz. In his closing annual report, he has summarized many of the hopes and realities of his own experience. He had to face a trying burden of fiscal exigency, with one blow after another that threatened the actual survival of the University. It is just one measure of his stewardship that the fiscal affairs of the institution are once again stable, that through strenuous efforts both of cost-control and of fund-raising, the balance sheets for his final year were once again in the black. I know that he, and our Chairman, Pat Haggerty, have made exceptional efforts to achieve this position as the startup for my own turn.

This is just a preliminary sketch of my visions as I enter this task; and I look forward to the opportunity of meeting with you this fall to help fill in the canvas.

Joshua Lederberg